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Socio-Economic Determinants of Working Children: Evidence from Capital Territory of Islamabad, Pakistan

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Abstract: *Child labor work is a tireless social wonder in the creating scene particularly in Pakistan. In recent decades, the touchy issue of tyke work has been the consideration of policymakers, statesmen, and analysts. Any correct data on tyke work is normally rare as vast majority of the children, work in disorderly casual division, which is neither controlled by work laws nor is checked by any association. In this review, an endeavor has been made to examine the significant supply side financial determinants of working kids in Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT), Pakistan. Essential information has been gathered from child workers, working in various business markets of ICT. Results demonstrate that the absence of education and obliviousness of guardians, substantial family sizes, low salary of guardians and poor work status, low grown-up business proportion were the causative variables of tyke work. These working children are typically unskilled and secure employment at an early age and are susceptible, when working timeframes are extended in disreputable conditions, have no beneficial protection, abandon adequate and legitimate sustenance and attire, and get little rest and diversion. Enactment against child work*

is not a perfect arrangement in a nation such as Pakistan. This misuse of child work cannot be ceased by tyke work laws as it were. In such manner, different measures, for example, destitution lessening programs, more offices for instruction and professional preparing are fundamental. In the light of the results, positive steps and policies have been developed.

Keywords: Child-Labor, Socio-economic determinants, Poverty, Pakistan

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1. Introduction

Prevalence of child labor is not a new activity in modern world. Child labor has been common practice throughout history and still children are employed in different human societies especially in developing and underdeveloped countries. According to International Labor Organization (ILO) estimation, there are around 215 million children working worldwide between ages five to fourteen, whilst 179 million are engaged in hazardous and worst forms of labor, where they are illegally treated and worked for long hours (ILO, 2013). Child labor is multifaceted socio-politico-economic and insurmountable issue, which humanity is struggling with today. Child labor is a multidimensional bitter reality and deep-rooted phenomenon in Pakistan's society. Exact statistics and estimates on child labor are unavailable in Pakistan due to lack of proper data collection procedures and unavailability of macro surveys. In addition, the most recent nation-wide survey of child labor was conducted in 1996 by Federal Bureau of Statistics (FBS), Pakistan with the coordination of Ministry of Labor & Manpower and ILO.

The 1996 child labor survey was first most comprehensive and unique kind of survey in Pakistan. According to its findings, among total 40 million children aged between 5-14, there are more than 3.3 million children are part of labor force and working in all sectors of country. Moreover, According to Labor Force Survey (LFS) 1999-2000, the child workers ages ranging from 10-14 are around 22 to 24 per cent of the total population of country and the highest ratio has been observed in Punjab (11.83%) while Sindh province has lower ratio of child workers (8.5%).

In Pakistan, some micro surveys and case studies have reported that large number of children are economically active in all sectors of economy, although mostly engage in informal sector, domestic work, or agricultural activities, and minute ratio in formal sector of economy by sacrificing their childhood, education, health and their lives (Siddiqi & Patrinos 1995). Boys are mostly active in the urban areas especially in informal sectors like tea-stalls, cobbler, food shops, workshops etc. and female children are engaged in domestic or household chores like baby-sitters, maids, and house cleaners, in well-off families. The most popular term "Chhota (child worker) is commonly used for child workers in Pakistani society and these Chhota can be seen in every cluster and surface of society. Usually, these Chhottas are considered inevitable part of workshops, roadside hotels, tuck shops, tea stalls and petrol stations. In Pakistan, the major sector

absorbing children are manufacturing, transport, trade, and other services in urban areas and agriculture, brick kiln industry in rural areas. As an agrarian country, the huge ratio of children is playing their role in the agricultural sector like cultivation, forestry, dairy and poultry farming, helping their parents for their livelihood (Khan 2000). Similarly, child labor has been observed in manufacturing industry especially in small scale and informal sector like cottage industry, power looms, carpet weaving, sports industry, and surgical industry (Awan et al. 1992); in construction side, large number of children are active in building and road construction, stone quarrying and brick kiln sector (Ali et al. 1999). Thus, young workers are working everywhere as residential hirelings, shoemakers, watch creators, circuit repairmen, mechanics, painters, tin packers, paper pickers, waste pickers, in inns and eateries as administrators, in clothing shops, hair parlors, fitting and weaving shops etc. (Ali et al. 2003).

Children are normally working in undeclared or un-official sector of the country which is not regulated by labor laws and not monitored by any governmental institution and no record is maintained. Although, Pakistan has initiated few policies and child labor laws to prohibit this practice, as well as GOP has also ratified UN Conventions on the Rights of the Child in 1990, and subsequently approved a new law known as employment of children Act 1991. This employment of children Act 1991 defines that a boy or girl under the age of fourteen would be considered a child. Therefore, the minimum age for economically active children in Pakistan is 14 years; while most of developed countries have fixed it at 16 years. An operational and conceptual definition of child labor, for the need of the study, is defined as all sorts of activities performed by a child for monetary benefits, either for self or family, whether hazardous or undamaging up to age 14. Thus, accordingly, children below the age of 14 years if work for any monetary gain would be considered as child labor whether the work is of light nature or damaging to health.

The present study exclusively focuses on the supply side determinants of the working children in Islamabad and tries to answer questions like why these children are victims of child labor and which factors are responsible for stealing their childhood and their right to get education & how can the law be implemented to eradicate the child labor practices & what steps should be taken to prevent child labor?

2. Literature Review

The supply side determinants of child labor, its consequences, effects and impacts have been subjected to theoretical discourse. Although variety of approaches has been developed but well-known shifts in this debate regarding the supply-side determinants of child labor are being discussed in the proceeding paragraphs. These approaches are well known among social scholars and have been used to deal with the issue of child labor.

2.1 Children as Household Assets

The household decision approach is one of the basic tools to analyze the supply side of child labor. Household always considered child-labor as consumption good to increase the income level. For example, Basu (1998), in his study finds positive correlation between household decision and child labor; the study basically focuses on the household conditions, parental characteristics and the interaction between child labor and that of adults. In the general, composition of family demonstrates at least one grown-up and at least one youngster. On the off chance that the market compensation are adequate and

satisfy the family subsistence needs, at that point just grown-ups will work, on the other hand, if the market compensation decline and are below family subsistence level, at that point kids would also work. Thusly, it defines the two conceivable harmonies: one where compensation is sufficiently high and just grown-ups' work, and where compensation is below the subsistence level and kids must work (Basu & Van 1998). In this unique circumstance, youngsters are seen in terms of incentive as resources. Abusing a family unit's benefits may often require the contributions of kid work.

2.2 The Poverty Hypothesis

Poverty is the most important and well-known supply side determinant of child labor. Poverty can be observed as a prominent supply side factor at both micro and macro level. At the full scale level, it is seen that working kids speak to a diminishing extent of the aggregate work constrain as total national output (Gross domestic product) per capita expands; the smaller scale level variables of destitution straightforwardly influence the family unit. Some researchers point out that neediness might be dissected in connection to social and sex factors, in opposition to that, a considerable measure of studies (Edmonds & Pavcnik, 2003) presume that destitution and hazard factors (war, malady, and calamity) on the whole improve kid work marvel. While some scholars propose that destitution is a causal factor in the kid work (Rosati & Tzannatos 2003) yet the literature uncovers another continuous approach "neediness trap" that cannot likewise be overlooked. In any era, the youngsters who do not work do not go to class and do not get any aptitudes. Along these lines, after becoming guardians themselves, they send their own youngsters to work and this constitutes endless process (Akabayashi & Psacharopoulos 1999). This endless loop is known as "neediness trap".

2.3 Causes of Child Labor

The theoretical study discussed in this section provides the base from which qualitative settings of the study has been derived. Ali et al. (2010) made a comparison of child labor between urban and rural regions of Pakistan. The study finds that the causes of child labor are different in both urban and rural areas of Pakistan. However, gender discrimination, strict family attitude and ignorance of parents are the root cause of child discrimination in both aspects. Ali and Khan (2003) scrutinized the determinants of supply side from urban areas of Pakistan. The findings of research describes that girls are in a prestigious position and are contributing less in the economic activities because of socio-religious factors. Ownership of assets or family business further increases the possibility of work for boys. The research suggests reducing poverty in the country and increase in the wages of adult workers to eliminate child labor. Hence, it will ensure children participation in education. Karim (1995) have examined parents' decisions about their children work and look at the reasons why parents enforce their children to work. The results confirmed that less income of family head, less parental education, low income of a family and huge family size are the major drivers that propel children to work. Ali and Hamid (2004) carried-out a study on female child labor in the city of Multan and illustrated the factors that are behind female child labor working in very well off and educated families. The observations were collected from sixty girls, working as maidservants, baby-sitters and doing other household tasks. The result depicts that the intolerable economic circumstances of a family, huge family sizes and low income of

parents, push girl children to work instead of school as they have no other option of expanding income. Malik, et al (2012) examined the supply side determinants of child labor and gathered the data from Multan & Sukkur in Pakistan. They discovered that poverty is significant factor that usually push the children to work, but the family income, father and mother education levels, influence parents' decision to send their children to work for their economic prosperity. There are some similarities in both districts large family size and less household income is also common in child laborer families. However, in both districts, financial prosperity of household head compromised education, credit scheme for poor, incentives for parents who send children to school rather to market can reduce the likelihood of child labor.

Khalid and Shahnaz (2004) worked with a data of 547 child workers collected from Southern Punjab, Pakistan. The survey consisted of children between the ages of 11-14 years. The study found that high family unit consumption in urban areas was the major cause of child labor as compared to rural zones. Destitution was the central tenet behind youngsters work especially in urban regions, although some different components were also found contributing towards child work, for example, father's salary, family measure, capabilities of guardians, kids build up an enthusiasm for work because of family obligations, an absence of instructive open doors for kids from poor families and family unit neediness at the cost of their training.

Arfan et al (2016) find socio-economic determinants of child labor at brick kilns in Jhang, Pakistan. The authors adopted qualitative approach and conducted in-depth interviews of children from brick kilns. Financial factors force the family to engage their children in work at brick kilns with them for the enhancement of household income. In Pakistan, labor at brick kilns is considered bonded labor because some poor families borrow money from the owners of brick kilns for the fulfillment of family needs and in return the entire family has to do work at brick kilns until the money is returned with interest. Although bonded labor is illegal in Pakistan but it is due to negligence, mismanagement and lack of monitoring by government agencies that it prevails. Mumtaz et al (2012) reveals that chronic household poverty, illiteracy, unemployment and parental education are the critical causes behind child labor in automobile workshops in Sargodha. Two hundred boys were interviewed and results of the survey revealed that large number of boys start labor at the age of eight years. In addition, high proportion of boys never attended school in their life and their parents had no formal education. Majority of children have very low earnings like average wage ranged between Rs. 500-700 per month. Children reported that they have large families ranging between 5-7 members and mostly boys are working because their parents sent them to work due to poverty and financial constraints. Haider and Qureshi (2015) in their study conducted in specific districts of South Punjab, Pakistan found that the main cause of child labor was poverty coupled with father's income, family size, and qualifications of parent's. The study found that children develop an interest in labor due to family responsibilities, a lack of educational opportunities for children from poor families and household poverty at the cost of their education.

Children have to do more work because of poverty, families are unable to sustain themselves, and thus, making children work and support their families alongside their elders. Kashif and Hussain (2013) reported that some key factors such as uncertain jobs market, inflation, poor living standard, weak economy, civic negligence, and

unawareness of parents, push the children to labor market. According to them, child labor is dependent on their respective household income, working status of parents, education of household head and when poor families face trouble to generate income, they push their children to the work. Awan et al. (2011) explored the supply side determinants of the working children. The study indicated that low education level of mothers, large family members, and low family income derives children to work place that often damages their development. Results have shown that the parents of child laborers are often unemployed or underemployment, and desperate for secure employment and income. Tanver, et al (2014) in their study indicated that mostly 12-15 year old group of children actively participated in the work in Lahore city. The study further pointed that around 56% of the working children were uneducated and unpaid and the reasons for working included household poverty and it was compulsory for the children to financially support their families. Fasih (2007) assessed the legislation on children participation in labor force with reference to its impacts on the Children Employment Act 1991 of Pakistan. The secondary data set was taken from Pakistan integrated survey 1991 and a natural experiment approach was applied. The empirical results of the study shows that male children are mostly victim of Act 1991 and girls are less affected by this Act because they are engaged in household activities and are not a part of formal economic sector.

The literature on child labor in Pakistan shows that most of the available research work is based on case studies and small surveys, which cover few cities, villages, and small entities. The literature suggests that poverty is the main cause behind child labor in Pakistan.

3. Methodology

The study was conducted to find the causes of child labor in Pakistan. A descriptive research design was found to be appropriate to investigate the problem. Different scholars propose (Weiner et al. 1995; Durrant 1998) that among different descriptive research designs, survey-based investigation is the most suitable for extracting reliable results. Population for the study consisted of the children actively working in different commercial areas of Islamabad Capital Territory, Pakistan. The study is further delimited to full time working male children aged up to 14 years. The data were collected through pre-constructed research instrument covering different determinants i.e. socio-economic characteristics, children characteristics, parental characteristics, household characteristics, age, education, income, family size and adult employment. Primary data had been collected through face-to-face interviews of children with the help of interview schedule. The interview schedule was prepared in English but questions were asked in the local languages for their better understanding. The mode of survey questionnaire was not suitable for collecting information, because the targeted population (that is working children) was not able to fill the questionnaire due to immaturity, age factor, and low education. Using simple random technique, 384 respondents were targeted. 307 interview schedules were successfully collected and were used in the final analysis representing a response rate of 80 percent.

4. Analysis and Discussion

The age of children is very important variable, which determines the child work decision,

entry to work and its intensity. The age of entry to work varies considerably from occupation to occupation, industry to industry and between urban-rural areas (Dessy, et al 2005). The result shows (Table 1) that overwhelming children active in labor market of Islamabad belong to ages 13-14 years (60.3%) and 11-12 years (30.3%). Furthermore, majority of the children started work as early as 8 years. One established finding in studies of child labor is that the older the child, the higher his or her wage (Gormly, et al 2005). During the survey one more thing was revealed that majority of the child workers were eldest among their siblings. When families push their children for subsistence reason, they may select their senior children for the employment first, where these senior children get relatively higher wages than junior children. Most probably the elder children are more productive, useful, and much reliable as well as better able to perform complicated and complex tasks.

Table 1: *Age of the Respondent*

Age (years)	Frequency	Percent
7 or below 7	4	1.3
8-10	25	8.1
11-12	93	30.3
13-14	185	60.3
Total	307	100.0

In young age, when children do work they lose educational capabilities due to the burden of work, which is more than their capacity and each additional year of education of child decreases the likelihood to work (Sahn & Glick 1999). The result shows (Table 2) that almost 54.4% of children were totally illiterate. Only 36.5% were primary educated and a fraction of children (9.1%) have passed middle level of school. The results confirm that the children started work at an early age and due to which they dropped their schooling.

Table 2: *Education of the Respondent*

Years of schooling	Frequency	Percent
Never attend School	167	54.4
Primary	112	36.5
Middle	28	9.1
Total	307	100.0

Results of the present study indicate several reasons for starting work. The major cause is household poverty but other factors such as parental decision, household enterprise or assets, and child's apathy towards education. The results (Table 3) confirm that overwhelming children, almost 62% of them were supporting their families, and they contribute in household income. Hussain (2003) in his study has shown that majority of the child workers come from lower income families. Children are often put to work as a deterrent to idling rather than as an economic necessity. Otsuka and Hayami (1992) also pointed out that parents believe that early entry into work is beneficial for children as

they argue that children essential vocation skill and become adept at financial management and negotiation with adults.

Table 3: *Reason for starting work*

Reasons	Frequency	Percent
Family Enterprise or Assets	18	5.9
To Support Family	189	61.6
Parental Decision	40	13.0
No Interest in Study	60	19.5
Total	307	100.0

Corporal punishment, inadequate education system, bad behavior of teachers, is another major factor for dropping out of school (Greene 1992). Almost 19.5 % of children showed apathy towards education and studies. When the children were asked about their disinterest in the studies, most of the children stated that they drop out of school because of their poor performance. Some of the children also complained about the punishments they received by teachers due to poor performance and the bad attitude of teachers.

In addition, when the study explored the relationship between number of working hours and the income, it was found that (Table 4) almost 47.6% of the working children were earning between \$20-\$40 per month and the children earning less than \$20 constitutes about 25.4% of the entire sample. This simply indicates that 73 percent of children receive less than the approved minimum wages in the country. There is no clear motivation regarding the future and majority of the children, were not satisfied with what they do and they showed the complete lack of interest in work. The remaining do not know better substitutes, mainly because the majority of child workers came from less educated families and their parents, or perhaps their surrounding environment, is not a source of inspiration for them. To summarize, it is quite clear that children are always exploited in terms of long working hours, less wages, and they do not enjoy any form of security from a legal point of view.

Table 4: *Income of the Respondents -Rs/month*

Income (Rs/month)	Frequency	Percent
Rs 2000 or less	78	25.4
Rs 2000-4000	146	47.6
Rs 4000-6000	59	19.2
Above	24	7.8
Total	307	100.0

Generally, it is believed that educational level of parents play a vital role in determining children's labor activities. Most probably educated parent earns higher income and they are more likely to be able to send their children to school. The results of the present study reveal that parents of the child workers are very deprived in education. Majority of the child laborer's parents (Table 5) Fathers (59.6%) and Mothers (86.3%) has been found totally illiterate and they never attended school in their life.

Table 5: *Education of Parents*

Parental Education	Frequency	Percent
<i>Education of Father</i>		
No schooling	183	59.6
Primary	75	24.4
Above	49	16
Total	307	100.0
<i>Education of Mother</i>		
No schooling	265	86.3
Primary	31	10.1
Above	11	3.6
Total	307	100.0

Cigno and Rosati (2000) report that parental employment status and income level has significant impact on child labor, whether it is complementary or substitute. Table 6 illustrates 59.3% children respond that only their fathers are earning or working and 24.8% stated that their parents do not work or earn that is why they have to do work to support their families.

Table 6: *Parental Employment Status*

Parental Employment Status	Frequency	Percent
Only Father	182	59.3
Only Mother	17	5.5
Both	32	10.4
None	76	24.8
Total	307	100.0

Table 7 shows the monthly income level of Family head and according to results, 37.8 % family heads earns Rs. 4,000 or below while 12.7% are getting above Rs.10,000.

Table 7: *Monthly Income of Family Head*

Income of Family head	Frequency	Percent
Rs 4,000 or Below	116	37.8
Rs 4,000-6,000	57	18.6
Rs 6,000-8,000	58	18.9
Rs 8,000-10,000	37	12.1
Above 10,000	39	12.7

Total	307	100.0
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The effect of family size on children work is found significant in the present study. The results reveal that almost (Table 8) 88.3% children have more than 6 family members and 9.4% have 4-6 members in their families respectively. Larger family size means a lower likelihood to go to school and larger household size increases the possibility for a child to work (Grootaert 1998). It is also found that household who have more children tend to choose full time work for their children.

Table 8: *Family Size*

Family Members	Frequency	Percent
4 or less	7	2.3
4-6	29	9.4
More than 6	271	88.3
Total	307	100.0

Majority of the children (Table 9) 69.4% belong to such families, which have two or less adult workers. Adult unemployment affects the child labor at two stages i.e. at the household level and at the national level. At the household level, unemployment is the cause of poverty. Therefore, unemployment causes lower income, vulnerability and ultimately child labor and at the national level unemployment causes decline in GDP (Rosenzweig 1990), for example change in employment in Pakistan causes 30 percent change in GDP (Eswaran 2000). Hence, adult employment and underemployment in the country increases poverty and child labor.

Table 9: *Adult Employment Ratio in Family*

Adult workers in family	Frequency	Percent
2 or less	213	69.4
2-4	80	26.1
Above 4	14	4.5
Total	307	100.0

Rural-urban and core-periphery locality of the household has an impact on the decision of child labor. Majority of the children are living in slums and squatter settlements with their families in Islamabad. The results show that poor socio-economic background of the household is the major reason for the child-labor that compels children to work. The study finds that low income of parents, poor employment status of parents, low education and ignorance of parents, large family sizes, low adult employment ratio in family, migration from rural to urban areas are the factors of child labor.

5. Conclusion and policy recommendations

The child labor is persistent social evil all over the developing world and Pakistan is no exception to it. In the last couple of decades, child labor problem has got the attention of policymakers, statesmen, advocates, media personals, journalist, social activist, and researchers. Although, number of case studies, researches, and surveys has been conducted to estimate the total number of active working children and the factors causing child labor, still there is little understanding regarding prevalence of child labor in the society. In Pakistan, undoubtedly there is diverse nature of child labor with different determinants, which varies area to area and community to community. Generally these children can be seen everywhere in our society, where they are selling news papers, toys, flowers, funny masks, fruits etc. At the same time these children are easily found by the roadside hotels, cafes, tea stalls and auto workshops, where they work with their Ustad jee or Naik sab (Master or Boss). On the other hand, children work long hours and receive low wages as compared to their adult counterparts. Long working hours and low wages explain that the overall physical conditions of working children are extremely poor. The employers prefer to hire children because they are less paid and easy to manage without bargain.

Virtually, poverty is the main factor, which stimulates the children to work. Low household resources and income demand children's contribution in income of family. The socioeconomic backgrounds of the children are victimizing them. There is an intolerable economic pressure exerted on the parents that them to make their children work. These children have no substitute and choice except to surrender to their parent's authority. The earning level and employment status of their parents are very dismal especially mother's employment status. Demographic factors, large family sizes and less earning hands are the most pressing issues in child laborer's families. The fertility rate is very high in poor families in Pakistan, mainly because of low awareness of the consequences. Due to huge family sizes, parents are compelled to make their children work to meet ends and solve the economic problem of their families.

However, there are contradictory opinions, ideas and theories about child labor whether it is right and wrong, it should be legal, or not. The developed countries focus on child education more to prepare the human capital for the future. In developing countries like Pakistan, which has huge labor force and where education based job opportunities are less, working in a factory or market is a way to learn skills as an alternative. In reality, the complete ban on child labor in Pakistan can worsen already existing economic situations of poor families, which are dependent on their children and have no way to come out of poverty. The purpose of child labor policies should be to protect child laborers, and should not try to remove children from work. Simply banning the children from work and ensuring their school attendance without improving economic conditions can probably make the family worse off. If overall economic conditions of families would not improve, definitely children would carry on the work to increase household income, irrespective of any policy or legislative prohibition. Moreover, it should be noted that anti-child labor policies could help to decrease the child labor, but such policies are never effective in having a large impact on child labor in the end. In this context, policies and programs are much important to enhance household welfare instead of child labor prohibition policies. Therefore, all this discussion leads towards implementation of a comprehensive recommendations program, project and plan for betterment of the child worker without worsening already prevailing conditions of their families.

In Pakistan, to curb child labor requires some pragmatic steps, applicable policies, programs and projects, and many stakeholders in public and private sectors. This is a major challenge in terms of policy development and effective coordination among various state and non-state actors. Direct policy measures can change the economic conditions of poor households in the desired direction without worse off any one. In this context, buying the time of working children and that enrolling them in school can be one of the options. Hence, Pakistan can initiate such programs like purchasing the children's time and promoting school attendance. Parents receive monthly cash and food as long as they send their children to school. This can be done by selecting communities based on their level of underdevelopment, and local communities can decide which household in community take benefits from the project.

The Government should provide basic social services to the poor people like preventive and curative health care, maternal care, and primary education. For the best outcomes, the government should decentralize the decision-making authorities and involve local government bodies for planning, implementation and monitoring of the project. For this purpose, Government should allocate sizeable investment in social sector and should increase the expenditure on social development program like poverty reduction and investment in human capital, through subsidized education, health care, and nutrition to poor households and provide allowance to poor household for children enrollment in school.

Similarly, there is a dire need of appropriate policies for improving school infrastructure, the quality of education and reducing the cost of education. Second, Easy access to education for all is an essential step and it is government responsibility to provide low cost schooling in vicinity of communities. Gender disparity in education should be minimized and good quality education, schools, relevant curricula and vocational training programs should be adapted to student's circumstances. Flexibility in school hours could adjust the working children and unique kind education programs can prepare child workers for return to full-time education.

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